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COMPOSING AND PERFORMING A SOLO GUITAR ALBUM:
REFLECTIONS ON COMPOSITIONAL IDENTITY

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music by Research

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Introduction

Musical identity is the characteristics of a musician's musical style. A composer is unique based upon personal background and influence. Mapping the distinctive features of ones musical style allows us to better consider their musical identity. By analysing my solo guitar album and identifying the key features, I will outline my own musical identity. The key features can be analysed under four categories. The first is *influence* and here I explore the genres, which have been uppermost in helping me to develop my own compositional style. This is followed by *structure*, where I explain my chosen structural strategy and place it into context with other structural methods. Thirdly, *harmonic and melodic choices* is the segment in which I detail and expand upon my compositional features. Lastly, *the effect of technical skill* is the section in which I consider the benefits of playing ability in order to positively affect the music. The purpose of mapping my own musical style is to further enable me to make decisions based on this knowledge to create desirable progression within future works. This insight also supplies future musicians with a unique method of composing and performing a solo guitar album.

With regards to the topic of this research, there has been little written about a composer's musical style by individual composers themselves, the field includes a range of literature documenting the unique style of composers, which provide details of their personal life, influence and an analysis of musical work (Adams, 1995). With this example classical composers are usually favoured as subjects rather than popular music artists, because of their legacy. By tracing key musical elements, authors have also mapped the style of music from various cultures, and specific types of songs (Turino, 2016). After researching the main categories that structure this thesis, I have discovered an issue regarding the concept of genre. Under the category of 'influence', genre provides methods for defining genre systems and how they are constructed. Fabbri states that the course of a musical genre is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules (1981, p. 1). This raises an issue of genre being contested and constructed by various competing discourses (Kahn- Harris, 2006, p, 12). This means that conclusions drawn about my musical style are subjective. There are also issues with the concepts of 'structure' and 'practice based-research'. Within the area of structure, it is said that repetition is common within popular music (Huuki, 2018, p. 7). Whilst definitions do exist for the less repetitive structural method of 'through-composition', the technique is usually only briefly mentioned in small specific cases in both the classical and popular music world. *The Art of Classical Guitar Playing* and

Classic Guitar Technique (Vol. 1) are examples of essential study in developing playing ability on the Spanish guitar. These works provide valuable techniques, but can lack detailed explanation as to the benefits of these methods.

A musical influence impacts the creative decisions that artists choose. Collins explains, "The influence of one artist upon another can take a wide variety of forms, from plagiarism, borrowing and quotation all the way to imitation and eventually to the profound but almost invisible" (2011, p. 104). My musical style is similar to the genre of classical guitar because of the same instrumentation and tone of the Spanish instrument. Two of the main genres that influence my musical style are metal and electronic dance music (EDM), where the influential points mainly fall under harmonic aspects. On the surface, these genres seem to contrast my musical style by using stylistic features such as distorted guitars/vocals and busy percussion. Fabbri states "a certain 'musical event' may be situated in the intersection of two or more genres, and therefore belong to each of these at the same time." (1981, p, 1). In this case, my style and these genres of influence use the same harmonic content, meaning this 'musical event' contributes to defining both. I have aimed to isolate each of the influential aspects in order to later discuss how these elements contribute to my musical identity.

Most music is written in parts or sections as stated by Fabbri (2012, p. 92). In contrast, my chosen method of song structure is to write music that is constant. This distinction is a feature of my personal style, which will later be discussed together with how my chosen method of structure compares with other structural form and techniques. The purpose of this is to illustrate some of the limitations and or practicality of different forms of structure.

Since my music uses one pitched instrument and is influenced mainly by harmonic aspects, harmonic and melodic choices is the main category, containing most of the features that contribute to my musical identity. I will expand upon the influential elements and other defining harmonic features in a sequential order from compositional preparation, to smaller and larger harmonic components. Holt describes that a musician can have his or her own style, but not genre (2007, p. 3). Writing a solo guitar album, which I described as similar to classical guitar, but unique in being influenced from an unusual harmonic origin, lacks definition. Wigram & Grocke state how music has been recognised as "a catalyst for stimulating the emotions and inducing rest and relaxation" (2007, p. 13). Using

references such as this, I will justify how my harmonic features contribute to crafting an identity of being soothing and relaxing, thus providing my unique style with an identity of 'soothing guitar'.

The guitar is a capable of playing up to six notes at one time. Glise states "Heitor Berlioz described the guitar as a miniature orchestra." (1997, p. 195). This means that the instrument is appropriate for writing music unaccompanied and this, together with the feel of the Spanish guitar, is why I chose to compose for the instrument. Brewer describes how the guitar is directly linked to the player, and that this forms a special relationship between the two, "There are no keys, hammers, valves, pedals, quills, reeds or other mechanisms involved. This produces an intimacy of physical contact between the player and instrument which is both attractive and demanding" (Brewer, 1986, p. 7). Since the player is in control of the sound, the tone, what material and how it is played, is governed by their technical capability. I will be discussing the importance of playing ability and how to develop technical skill in order to positively affect the music. This will be achieved by identifying the key points of the objectives of both the left and right hand. The purpose of this exploration is echoed by Duncan, "if art is the object, point the clearest way to it" (1995, p. vii).

Influence

Metal is the first genre of influence, and is often written in darker modes such as Aeolian (minor mode), Phrygian and locrian (Kahn-Harris, 2006, p. 31). Guitar harmonies, quick rhythms and distorted palm muted guitars and vocals are stylistic features of metal music (Dunn, 2014, p. 111). The melodies of some metal tracks such as "You Can't Control Me" (Farkas, 2014, track 1) do not feature sombre tonality, but sound purely tense and aggressive, which is consistent with the harmonic character at which I draw upon.

Crowder's statement acknowledges that melancholia is the common perception of minor key tonality, "Indeed, the association of the major mode with hap- py and minor with sad is the most solid link we have between music structure and the language of human emotions." (Crowder, 1984, p. 4). Although it is the general consensus that minor keys portray sad emotions, there are different interpretations of the emotional qualities of music, many of which are culturally specific (Young, 2014, p. 28). Crowe states, "We are culturally conditioned to assign moods to music whether hearing the music actually arouses that particular emotional state in us or not." (2004, p. 245). This means that our perception of a musical key can be coloured by other influences rather than the natural quality of the key itself.

Even though melodies heard in metal use intervals that would cast dissonance as harmony such as 2nds, harmony within metal stylistically uses $3^{rd's}$, $5^{th's}$ and perfect octaves, which are consonant (Costa, 2000, p. 8). Any amount of dissonance is exemplified because of guitar distortion, as can be heard from the high register guitar material in "False" at 0:27 (Sepultura, 2006, track 5). $5^{th's}$ sometimes with the added upper octave as chords, is one of metal's most common features and can be seen in "To Live Is to Die" at 1:06 (Metallica, 1988, track 8) and "Prophecy" at 0:50 (Cavalera, 2004, track 1). Harmonising guitars during lead moments can be heard in "One" at 6:34 (Metallica, 1988, track 4), "Blackened" at 0:05 (Metallica 1988, track 1), and in "Aesthetics Of Hate" at 2:14 (Machine Head, 2007, track 3).

Metal gave me the experience to write music of a long duration; with most of Metallica's music exceeding six minutes in length, e.g. *…And Justice For All* (1988). These references taught me that by simply adding more varied sections such as a bridge; interludes or instrumental solos, in amongst commonly repeated sections such as verses and choruses, this would enable me to hold the listeners attention. Even though my method of song structure for solo guitar does not directly use sections such as these. Using the knowledge I am able to keep the listeners engaged during extensive duration, by featuring as much variation as necessary.

A guitarist requires a certain level of technical skill in order to play metal because of its short rhythmic values (Purcell, 2012, p. 9). You can see this influence at 1:57 during "By My Side" (McLaren, 2018, track 3), and at 2:15 in Weeping My Soul (McLaren, 2018, track 2). Unlike Yngwie Malmsteen for example, who was influenced by classical music in order to play neo-classical metal (Farley, 2016, p. 81). It could be perceived that my influence is diametrically opposite to his, using metal to influence a form of popular music played on a classical instrument.

The influence of EDM is of the same harmonic equivalence. A piece needs to be melancholic, as perceived from the minor tonality in "Wings (Michael Milov Euphoric Mix)" by Sandu (2014), or mirror the same nature as aggressive metal pieces as heard in "Fractal" from 1:22 (Captain Panic, 2015). If a piece follows either of these two harmonic concepts; regardless of EDM sub-genre, it may be of influence. It is common for EDM pieces to have a long duration similar to Metallica or Machine Head, but I do not take any influence from EDM structure; as it is concise and repetitive. My connection with the genre is solely based upon the harmonic aspect. The ethereal setting, which I perceive many EDM tracks to portray, is another influential feature, with two examples heard within "*Big Data*" (Misanthrop, 2015) and "Story Of An Epic (E.T Project Remix)" at 1:46 (Araldi, 2013, track 2). The image is created either because of the tone of the instruments; or the added atmosphere from the complex arrangement of layers in the piece. I attempt to create an ethereal experience in "Lost I" (McLaren, 2018, track 8) by using long note values with a slow tempo.

Melancholia can be defined as "a complex emotion with aspects of both pain and pleasure which draws on a range of emotions-sadness, love and longing-all of which are bound within a reflective, solitary state of mind" (Brady, E., & Haapala, A, 2003). It is a common perception that melancholia is supposed to provoke sadness, but this quality can also be received in a positive manner. Vitouch tells us that when a depressive film scene was accompanied by a melancholic film score, two different perceptions of the music gave descriptions such as; 'sad', 'dramatic', 'romantic' and 'something loving' (2001, p. 79). I compose using minor key tonality and consonant harmonic content in order to create a comfortable and nurturing setting for the listener.

The final musical style of influence, which transcends genre, is 'soothing music'. I am referring to calm music played in minor keys and a lack of dissonance. This concept can be heard from many tracks such as "The Earth Prelude" (Einaudi, 2011, track 2), Eau De Vie (Takanashi, 2011, track 2) or "The Burning Red" (Machine Head, 1999, track 12). This form of influence is consistent with the previous, and is comparable to the style in which I write. North and Hargreaves state how musical influence can be the defining factor of ones musical identity, "The style of a piece exerts an important influence upon our aesthetic response to it, and under certain circumstances this influence can be more powerful than the piece itself" (1997, p. 193).

Structure

My method of song structure is known as 'through-composed' where the music will constantly change and rarely repeat (Nelson, 2005, p. 8). I would experiment in a key until I found a piece of acceptable content and would continue adding onto the end of the piece until it gathered enough duration. Progress is created by allowing the preceding material to naturally influence the next (Allison & Wellborn, 1973, p, 222). During these particular points I endeavour to try every appropriate combination of notes at every step throughout the track. DeSantis tells us that, subtracting layers as a compositional tool, is to turn a "pile of stuff" into a song towards the end of the compositional process (2015). When I feel my material has reached its end point; I make very little or indeed no changes to the current content. During my introduction I classified musical identity to mean the features that define ones musical style. Randles suggests that the conflict of choosing what material to select, also contributes to shaping musical identity (2009, p. 54). In the *Metallica - Classic Album Series* (Longfellow, 2001), Hetfield explains that the bands main writing strategy is to take one idea, and use it to influence other phrases and variations, to form all of the material necessary for the sections of the piece. This often means that the newly formed material sounds similar to the original idea, as can be heard in "Enter Sandman" (Metallica, 1991, track 1). My music often moves further away from its first material. An example is how the introduction was the first section written for "Never Forgotten" (McLaren, 2018, track 7) and all other sections were different and or never featured any theme from the original piece. My music in its usual state is a collection of variation or unrelated idea. This strategy is the opposite of "development", which is frequently seen in classical music rather than popular music. The composer takes an idea and it evolves and flourishes throughout the piece in amongst re-used sections of the same material as can seen in Für Elise (Van Beethovan, 1867).

I naturally took to the through-composed method because it enabled total compositional freedom. In order to introduce some appropriate structural variety; I employed set or recurring sections. Working with motifs seemed to totally contrast through-composition, thus I found it difficult to utilise. "Weeping My Soul" (McLaren, 2018, track 2) and "By My Side" (McLaren, 2018, track 3) are where I have copied the introduction as the outro known as a 'frame' (Nelson, 2005, p, 4), or I take one segment and repeat it multiple times. For pieces such as "Broken Angel" (McLaren, 2018, track 4) and "The Dream is Real" (McLaren, 2018, track 5), I took influence from common "pop" structures such as

ABAB or ABAC (Julien, 2012, p. 33). The re-used sections are varied, so that the material is fresh but it should be apparent to the listener that this point is a variation of the previous one. This idea is most explored in "Lost II" (McLaren, 2018, track 9). Varying a re-used section is comparable to a technique seen in popular music, by splitting a chorus into four 8 bar repeated sections, where the third contrasts melodically and harmonically (Fabbri, 2012). Classical composers such as Bach write using repeated forms such as the "Rondo" structure, which is identical to the pop patterns mentioned above (Boyd & Butt, 1999, p. 422). Having experimented with other forms of structure, I came to the conclusion that through-composition is still my preference. I find through-composition does not necessarily provide greater compositional material in comparison to popular structure for example, but it may be perceived that the "journey" of the constant variation creates stronger immersion. Haydn wrote one of his most extraordinary symphonies utilising the through-composed technique. (Webster, 2004, p. 4).

Harmonic and Melodic Choices

Upon composing, I must choose a musical key to write with. All major and minor keys are an option, notwithstanding my distaste of major keys. The only factor to be aware of is that there are a select number of keys that are easier to utilise because they contain the notes that the open strings of the guitar are tuned too. Being able to use open strings means that you can bring out more musical content at one time with the right hand whilst having to do less with the left, thus enabling more creative opportunities. Writing a piece in a different key to the others on the album will confirm uniqueness.

A scale is the physical mapping of a musical key on the guitar instrument. Woody mentions, that Jazz musicians would practice scales to work on improvisational skills (2007, p. 35). Total competence with the scales will provide immediate access to all material. This is why ideally; preparation for my compositional process involves practicing my chosen key on the guitar fretboard, until the seven pitches become completely familiar. Valid material will sound consonant and mostly melancholic.

'Scalic' is a term I use in order to describe my style of melody, which involves ascending or descending the scale and variations (Bennett, 2012, p. 34). Ascending or descending can be heard in "Transfiguration" (Davis, 1995, track 8), "Joy to the World" (Handel, 1742) and "Fade To Black" at 0:48 (Metallica, 1984, track 4). Variations can be heard in the piece, "The Shift" during the introduction (Eye of the Enemy, 2014, track 5), in "Lost In Love" at 0:24 (legend B, 1997, track 4) and at 1:26 in "By My Side" (McLaren, 2018, track 3). Instead of playing the scale pitches consecutively, the pattern of notes are slightly altered so that the melody becomes a variation. Taking one of these varied patterns and following the sequence up or down the scale is a technique used for lead moments in metal that I feature. An example of this can be heard at 4:14 in "Ghost Will Haunt My Bones" (Machine Head, 2014, track 3), or at 1:45 in "Blind" (McLaren, 2013, track 3).

The harmonic foundation to many of my pieces has been a sustained bass note with a 3rd played above (Torres, 2013, p. 1). I vary the higher pitch by moving it up or down a scale degree in order to spawn movement, as can be heard in "Through The Eyes of God" (McLaren, 2013, track 2) at 0:37. This interval combined with other higher register consonant pitches to create a melody over the bass; can be seen in "Lost I" at 3:27 (McLaren, 2018, track 8) and in "So Fragile" at 0:59 (McLaren, 2018, track 1). When using the 3rd, another compositional tool is to add the octave note (unison harmony) above the bass note in order to play a strummed three-note arpeggio. These small arpeggios can be played rapidly, so that they change the overall pace of the piece and can be seen in "The Dream Is Real" at 0:47 (McLaren, 2018, track 5). Both of these tools were inspired by the perfect 5th and the unison and 3rd harmonies of the proceeding melody at 0:05 in Nyman's "The Heart Asks Pleasure first" (1993, track 4). Using said harmonies that Hewitt describes as 'peaceful' and 'pleasant' (2010, p. 19), I wrote my first solo guitar piece, "Start Of A New Beginning" (McLaren, 2013, track 1).

Throughout my pieces, the bass notes acts as a backing, whilst the higher interval or melody represents the lead. The bass will generally move up or down the scale by one degree after a melody has been played, see "Weeping My Soul" (McLaren, 2018, track 2) as an example at 1:45. Blum details a notion that scales are characterised by a 'sense of connectedness' (Blum, 1980, p, 103). I perceive that consecutively all the pitches of the scale have a degree of 'gravitational attraction'. The scale progression of I, VII, VI, VII, I, seem to be drawn to one another similarly to how Blum mentions the seventh pitch being drawn toward the tonic. This progression is a compositional tool that can be heard in "Broken Angel" (McLaren, 2018, track 4) at 2:51. Stephenson states that this succession of notes is a harmonic tradition in rock music, but also references many other progressions seen in popular music such as the blues progression I, IV, V combined with the ii, and iii (2002, p. 96-120, 150). It is important to note that I use the I,VII, VI, VII, I succession as singular notes, whereas these progressions are usually and in this case referenced as chords. The conventional progressions have been arranged mostly under the condition of the tone of the common triads. The step-wise relationship between the scale pitches of I, VII and VI can be heard in "Your Betrayal" at 1:54 (Bullet For My Valentine, 2010, track 1) and at 0:24 in Paranoid (Black Sabbath, 1970, track 2). In these examples, the pitches are used as one compositional idea or melody. Within my pieces, much of the content is comprised of just this compositional device similarly to how much popular music is solely written using the referenced progressions by Stephenson.

Between the harmonic content of my solo guitar style and other fingerpicked guitar such as classical, there are both similarities and differences. The similarities for example include "scalic" melody from 0:00 in "Romanza" (Anonymous, 1800) and "scalic" sequences heard throughout "Asturias" (Albéniz, 1892). In contrast "Brindle - El Polifemo de Oro (Four Fragments for Guitar)" (Bream, 1967, track 1) and "Choros No. 1 (Villa-Lobos)" (Bream, 1964, track 1) do not specifically follow the sequence of their musical key/scale; rather they use ambiguous fragments, strums or specifically crafted motifs.

I have previously described my music as 'soothing guitar'. Wigram & Grocke state elements that I feature, which are necessary in creating relaxing music, such as string instrumentation, lack of percussion, tonal and consonant harmonic structure, a predictable sequence of chords, few dynamic changes and step-wise melodies that use a small range of intervals (2006, p. 46). Elliott acknowledges that simple and consonant harmonies enhance the relaxing nature of music (2011 p. 267). Both articles also state legato and regular rhythms or repetition as contributing elements, which are not consistent features of my work. The relaxed or soothing state it not the purpose of my musical identity, but is attributed.

The Effect Of Technical Skills

Spatz describes that "searching-in-the-dark" is essential to research where whilst research is done outside of the body, the same can be achieved from embodiment; using the human body for discovery (Spatz, 2015, p. 62). The common perception is that spending time with an instrument is how new techniques and ideas are discovered. An example of this can be seen from the genre of death metal where "vocalists shaped their identity by discovering the technique of using the membranous folds above the vocal cords to exert pressure on the larynx to produce a deep, guttural growl" (Phillipov, 2012, p. 74). My opinion on the relevancy of creative development/exploration for the purpose of research appear to be justified by Davidson,

> "However, I feel that it is important to explore the theoretical potentials in regarding practical musical activities themselves as research. Indeed, if research is to do with experimentation, study, curiosity and enquiry, many practical music-making situations do at some level involve a research process. Here, I focus on process; for in the preparation of a piece, many performers investigate what sounds best and why. These performers may engage in some form of musicological research, or use an existing research literature such as the findings presented in the rest of the current volume as a grounding for their own performance" (2004, p. 134).

Development of technical skill is imperative, as my compositions require a certain level of ability, in order for them to be perfectly played. The desired level equals fluidity with the right hand and total control over dynamics and articulation at medium to quick paces. Shearer provides a notion that musical practice can lead to greater opportunities, "The student may be assured that by carefully learning to play each composition he will better equip himself for progress to larger works of even richer musical content" (1985, p. 70). The player should not restrict creative vision by only being limited to slower paces for example. Mastery of both hands to be able to perform any composition in order to bring it to reality is my goal in terms of performance technique. This is an example of Albert Schweitzer using performance as practice to help further his abilities "In this way, while I was still a young student, I became familiar with the work of Bach and had an opportunity to deal with the practical problems of producing the master's cantatas and passion music." (1933, p.11). Performing compositional material that requires a certain level of skill, helps to manufacture a unique musical identity, as other artists may still not yet have accessed or chosen to use these types of material.

The most genuine and consistent way to present my music for a studio recording is in one take. Jazz pianist Shapiro states "When you play creative music, the more you rehearse the more stilted it becomes. Recording in one take makes it sound a lot fresher." (Coleman, 2001). Live performances are authentic which is the equivalent of a one take recording, any "meditation" involved in the recording process is inauthentic (Zagorski-Thomas, 2014, p. 203). My findings upon guitar technique are important because when the time comes to perform during the recording process; however well I can play will determine the quality of the compositions. The presentation of the music's presence, dynamics and articulations are subject to how much control and experience I possess. These findings are justified by Roos, "Once right hand technique is improved and the ideal sound is attained, the performer will be free during playing to shift his focus to the interpretation of the music." (2009, p. 2). Being able to perform pieces using my own creative interpretation, gives them an element of exclusivity (Holt, 2007, p. 5).

I often play melodies and chords, which can be played easily with the use of a guitar plectrum such as the singular melodic lines heard in "Broken Angel" at 1:06 (Mclaren, 2018, track 4). Using fingerpicking to weave in and out of general and then exclusive fingerpicked material to access any sort of repertoire; whether it be; traditional classical guitar or scalic fragments, is the method by which I identify as my playing style. My right hand technique adopts the use of the thumb and four fingers. Sparks and Tyler state "And when the instrument will be sounded chordally with all the fingers of the right hand, it will make a beautiful effect, but this method of playing needs much practice to learn." (2002, p. 35).

An hour of strict practice can feel excessive if you are constantly repeating a piece or technique. Learning a piece well enough to be able to play whilst listening to music or watching visual content remedies this. This is my definitive practice method, which allows me to fit more hours of productive practice within my day also during out of practice hours. The result of this enabled me to produce pieces such as "The Dream Is Real" (McLaren, 2018, track 5). This is a quote from Hewitt that lists what aspects need to be in place for practice to be most productive, by which I believe my method accommodates for, "To be most productive, music practice is believed to require a well-defined task with an appropriate difficulty level for the musician, informative feedback, and opportunities for repetition and correction of errors" (Hewitt, 2001).

The left hand's role is to select notes, which sound if the right hand decides to play them, "Impulse 1: Right hand prepares, Left hand finds note. Impulse 2: Right hand executes" (Duncan, 1995, p. 71). How experienced a player is with their right hand will almost totally determine which written music they will be able to perform, aside from whichever movements the left hand cannot competently match. Since picking the strings is what is needed to make the guitar sound, solely practicing this is how I develop my right hand technique. This is done by practicing picking patterns during the routine mentioned above. The patterns are different arrangements of open strings such as repeatedly playing strings B, G and D or A, G, A and D. Variations can be seen in Shearer's *Classic Guitar Technique (Vol. 1)* (1985, p. 16) and Carcassi's *Method For The Guitar* (1896, p. 23). In practice when you are trying to develop technique by utilizing this method, be aware of your competence with the picking motion that you are trying to perfect. When building your technique you will feel the weakness or lack of confidence with each pluck whilst keeping your hand rigid. Applying more strength for temporal advancement will result in "flattened knuckles of splayed fingers (sometimes both); it also includes uncontrolled bobbing up and down of the hand." (Duncan, 1995, p. 3).

I have now covered the playing technique by which the right hand is developed but are still to explain how to achieve the desired tone. When performing the downward pick of the thumb, you must strike the string directly, vertically towards the ground, Roos concurs with this statement, "Quine's main principle is to aim the nail at an angle so that the string is projected more in a vertical than in a horizontal direction in relation to the soundboard. This creates a sound with more tone and volume."(2009, p. 7). Upon striking the string down and slightly horizontal you will cause unwanted string buzz. As the thumb strikes the string to sound the note, pushing the string horizontally is characteristic of vulnerability. When the player can naturally pick the string strongly vertically without hitting back into it or other strings, this will reward a strong clean tone. Sor states, "it can approach them with or recede without deranging the hand." (1980, p. 11). This method applies to the fingers; except the stroke of the string is upward instead of downward. Shearer provides a statement that summaries the role of the right hand and the implied need for development, "The thumb and fingers of the right hand are responsible for sounding notes with accuracy and speed, and producing different shades of tone with varying degrees of volume." (1985, p. 11).

As you fret a note with the left hand, "Play softly and use no more finger pressure at any time than absolutely necessary" (Duncan, 1995, p. 32). Tennant is of the same opinion stating, "The hands should be in a constant state of relaxation. This means that they should always be free of excess tension." (2002). Building strength is obtained through general fretting experience from guitar playing. A lack of strength will result in, "excessive pressure from the thumb, excessive wrist arch and sudden jerky movements." (Duncan, 1995, p. 3).

Conclusion

Through detailed analysis of my process I have found that there are four key features, which are imperative in constructing my musical identity. Writing music using minor keys, which have their own tonality, gives my music a consistent distinction. 'Scalic', is my style of melody, whether it be scale fragments or sequences of 'scalic' patterns. This type of melody can be seen less frequent in music similar to mine such as classical or other acoustic guitar music, but is a part of my style because of my influences. In terms of harmony, I base my music around 3rd, 5th and unison intervals in order to play consonant music. This type of harmony further provides my music with a consistent tone that contributes to the 'soothing' and 'inoffensive' style. These three harmonic features can all be traced from the genres, which have influenced my music. Whilst metal and EDM contrast with my music in certain stylistic aspects, the harmonic content is applicable for crafting what I consider to be a soothing guitar style. Metal and EDM are also consistent with the final form of influence 'soothing music', as they often contain similar harmonic components.

Through-composition is my method of song structure. This structural method contrasts popular music structures in that the music does not need to be written according to certain amounts of musical measure. I naturally took to the through-composed method because it allows music to be written in any shape or form. I find that using the method of through-composition has enabled me to write varied ideas, songs and incidental structural forms.

A level of technical skill is important in order to present my pieces in their recorded state, and to enable creative opportunities of more demanding material. Quick pace and/or short rhythmic values are indicative of technical ability and are heard within my album. This category inadvertently characterizes the artist's by allowing for more technical material or unique interpretation. Ultimately performance capability is not key in defining my musical identity, as the style of my music is consistent regardless of interpretation and or technicality. This indicates that the characterization of my music is conditioned by the harmonic and melodic content and structure. When these two categories are combined this results in a musical style that is popular music, written in minor keys, played on a classical instrument, which is structured using a less restrictive form. Close analysis has enabled me to recognize my way of composing and performing music, which is unique, appropriate and satisfying.

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